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THE WILSON BULLETIN

NO. 105

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGY

VOL. XXX

DECEMBER, 1918

NO. 4

OLD SERIES VOL. XXX. NEW SERIES VOL. XXV.

FINDING THE NEST OF THE KNOT.

BY W. ELMER EKBLAW.

To ornithologists and bird lovers the world over the most important result obtained by the recent Crocker Land Expedition to the Arctic regions was undoubtedly the discovery of the nest and eggs of the knot (*Tringa canutus*). Two full clutches of eggs, the nests in which they were laid, and the sitting birds upon them, were brought back to the American Museum of Natural History of New York.

Few eggs have been so eagerly sought as those of the knot; for a hundred years or more the nesting-places of this bird, so common on our shores in migration time, had been known to be far arctic and probably circumpolar; almost every expedition to the North for the last century has been definitely instructed to seek the nest and eggs; yet until this latest American expedition, the knots had foiled all explorers and successfully guarded the secret of their nests.

To Dr. Harrison J. Hunt, surgeon to the expedition, falls the honor of the first authenticated record of the discovery. In the early summer of 1916 he found the nest and newly-laid eggs on a high plateau almost two miles back from Thulé, the little Danish trading station on the shore of North Star Bay. His successful find came as the climax to persistent search, and study of the habits of the knot,

for two seasons previous, by the various members of the party.

During the summer of 1914, Dr. M. C. Tanquary, zoölogist of the expedition, and I were stationed at North Star Bay to study the biology and geology of the region about Wolstenholme Sound. In the course of our field work we repeatedly saw the knots at many different places. They frequented most, and were most often observed about, several small ponds near the shore not far from the trading station, but they also fed along streams far inland, and flew over the plateaus along the ice-cap. Dr. Tanquary and I were constantly on the look-out for the nests, but for a long time could find no clue as to where we might expect to find them.

About the middle of June we were returning from an all-day tramp back toward the ice-cap in pursuit of our investigations when we flushed a bird from a *dryas*-covered plateau over which we crossed on our way to headquarters. We did not then have time to search thoroughly, so we carefully marked the locality, and agreed to come back the next day to look again. The next day a violent blizzard was raging, and foul weather continued for ten days, with the consequence that we failed to go back to the plateau as soon as we had intended.

When finally the storm abated, I set out at once to the locality, bent on finding the nest. With little difficulty I found the place; but before I had approached within a hundred yards of it a pair of knots flew away. When they were out of sight I hid among the rocks and awaited their return, confident that when they came back I could readily follow them among the rocks through my powerful Leitz glasses.

I waited about a quarter of an hour, when one of the birds stooped like a hawk and alighted near the spot where I had flushed the birds when they left. Most circumspectly it slowly made its way to a little depression and nestled down. I rushed to the spot and was repaid for my long search by seeing the bird flutter away in the characteristic

sand-piper manner. But instead of the much desired eggs, I found the tiny, downy nestlings, apparently hatched only a few hours before!

In my keen disappointment I eagerly searched the whole plateau, wandering to and fro, peering into every depression, for almost eight hours, but with no success. And all further search on the days following resulted only in disappointment.

The summer of 1915 I carefully hunted over the high plateaus about Etah, and though I felt sure several times that my patience was about to be rewarded, I was doomed to discouraging failure.

Then again the season of 1916 presented another opportunity for success at North Star Bay, where I knew so well the place to look for the nests. Dr. Hunt and I were then stationed at the place, and I told him when and where we might most profitably search. When nesting-time came I was ill with a slight attack of influenza, contracted apparently from germs brought up in our summer's post, and the task of finding the eggs devolved upon Dr. Hunt.

Shortly after midnight, on June twenty-eighth, the golden sunshine of Arctic night flooding all the Northland, Dr. Hunt started back into the hills on a search for the nests. He seemed to have been gone but an hour, though morning was well advanced, when he came back exultant with the good news that he had found the nest.

As soon as I was able to go out, I went with him to the plateau; and there, just as he had left them, well marked with small cairns of stones that he had piled up, were the nest and the bird sitting upon its eggs. It did not flush until we nearly pushed it off the nest, and even then reluctantly. Before it left we photographed it on the nest, the camera scarce a yard away. We then collected the three eggs in the clutch, the nest, and the nesting bird.

A few days later, after diligent and persistent search, Dr. Hunt found another nest with four eggs on the same plateau. These two nests, so far as known, are the only nests yet definitely reported with eggs. No doubt, now that

the character of the nesting-site and the habits of the bird in the nesting-time are known, other nests will be found.

The futility of former search for the nest has probably been due to two causes. The first is that the nesting-site is unusual for a shore-bird, in that it is placed high up on rocky plateaus far from the sea; the second is that the bird so closely resembles the environment in which the nest is placed that it feels sure of escaping detection, and does not flush even when in danger of being stepped upon.

MIGRATION RECORDS FOR KANSAS BIRDS.

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I.

INTRODUCTION.

The list of the birds of Kansas, published in 1913, by Mr. Bunker,¹ showed 379 species and subspecies that had been taken or authentically observed in the state. More recent unpublished revisions conducted under his direction have increased the list somewhat. The large collection of the museum and the careful manner in which the work has been done vouches for the reliability of these results.

Of the list of 379 as published 29 are accidental occurrences or are not found within the limits of the state. Ten are very rare; 79 others are listed as rare; and 23 of those remaining are subspecies or varieties, usually one eastern and the other western in distribution, which are of interest only to the taxonomist and are often not distinguishable except by computing averages of many specimens.

While all such should be taken into account in any exhaustive list of the birds of the state it is of course incorrect to say that Kansas is populated by nearly 400 species of birds. It is of course often a matter of judgment as to

¹ Kansas University Science Bulletin, Vol. 7, No. 5. June, 1913. By C. D. Bunker.